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AUTHOR Johnston, George H.
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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to gather information on strategies valued by faculty search committee members at a midwestern community college. In the first phase of the study, 48 statements or search strategies were developed from a review of campus documents and interviews conducted with 20 faculty experienced in the hiring process. In the second phase, 25 faculty and staff members involved in the search process were asked to rate the importance of each of the 48 strategies. The 25 participants included the college president plus 12 who had participated in 6 or more searches and 12 who had participated in fewer than 6 searches. Responses were analyzed to determine differences in the perceived importance of the strategies between the more and the less experienced faculty. The study found that the more experienced faculty ranked "communication," including such strategies as asking faculty members to identify potential candidates and making certain that candidates' visits were pleasant, as the most important factor, while this strategy was ranked fifth by the less experienced faculty. Conversely, the less experienced faculty ranked "diversity training," including enhancing diversity training programs and educating the board of trustees on the importance of diversity, as the most important strategy, while the more experienced faculty ranked diversity fifth. Strategy ratings are appended. (Contains 10 references.) (BCY)

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The Effects of Previous Search Committee Experience on Perceptions of Importance for Strategies Used to Hire Community College Faculty

George H. Johnston, Ph.D.

Parkland College

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ABSTRACT

Research on the academic marketplace has largely focused on four-year degree granting institutions. Little is known about what strategies are effective in attracting and retaining qualified minority faculty in two-year colleges. The purpose of this paper is to determine if there are differences in perceptions of importance of various hiring strategies between faculty search committee members with experience and those with less experience.

The research for this paper was part of an in-depth case study using mixed methodologies undertaken at one midwestern community college. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase One involved document review and in-depth interviews with twenty "elite" participants thought to have experience with the faculty hiring process. As a result of the first phase of the study 48 statements or strategies were identified. In Phase Two participants were asked to rate each of the 48 statements on a 5 point Likert-type scale of importance. Participants were also asked to sort each of the 48 statements into stacks that made sense to them.

A modest correlation ($r = .36$) existed in the perception of importance of the various clusters between those who were experienced and those who were less experienced. Follow-up interviews revealed that some search committee chairs felt that more experience in the search process resulted in committee members who were more relaxed and less worried about "doing things right". There seemed to be differences in perception about the importance of availability of minorities as a factor in hiring more diverse faculty.

Administrative support alone seems insufficient to bring about changes that result in the hiring of a more diverse faculty. More study is needed to determine the effect of market place factors on community college hirings.

Introduction

Community colleges are facing a rapidly changing environment. Many faculty hired in the 1960s and 1970s are now reaching retirement age (Cohen and Brawer, 1989). Community colleges are also being faced with an increasingly diverse student population (Cvancara, 1995). At the same time community colleges are attempting to recruit qualified and more diverse replacements, external support for hiring a more diverse faculty in the form of affirmative action is being challenged both in the courts and in the voting booth.

Research on the academic marketplace has largely focused on four-year degree granting institutions. Little is known about what strategies are effective in attracting and retaining qualified minority faculty in two-year colleges. While some evidence suggests two-year colleges use faculty search committees in ways similar to search committees at four-year institutions, little is known about whether those search committees help or hinder the attempt to hire more diversified faculties. Nor is it clear what effect experience with previous search committees has on the selection process. The purpose of this paper is to determine if there are differences in perceptions of importance of various hiring strategies between faculty search committee members with experience and those with less experience.

Theoretical Framework

Empirical research on how community colleges hire faculty is limited. Literature based on research of faculty hiring at senior institutions (Hill, 1987) suggests that past experience may be an important factor in the attitude of search committee members towards extending extra efforts for interviewing and recommending members of protected groups. According to Hill when few or no blacks applied for a position, search committees "blamed low supply, not

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recruiting methods" (p. 228).

What research exists on community college faculty selection has stressed the importance of faculty involvement (Bromert, 1984; Kaplowitz, 1988; and Watts, 1993), yet Schneider (1987) has argued that search committees tend to replicate themselves. Given the fact that community college faculty are predominately white (Cvancara, 1995), such replication would result in less rather than more diversity.

The faculty search committee can be perceived as a form of participative management. Bolman and Deal (1991) described such participation in terms of what they referred to as a political frame. According to Bolman and Deal a college administration using a political frame might deal with women vocally demanding equality is to create a committee in the hope that such a committee will become focused on internal problems rather than producing any substantive change. The creation of such committees and any outcomes that may result become in effect empty rituals.

Methodology

The research for this paper was part of an in-depth case study using mixed methodologies undertaken at one midwestern community college thought to be an example of a college that had begun to address the issues of how to hire a more diverse full-time faculty. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase one involved document review and in-depth interviews with twenty "elite" participants thought to have experience with the faculty hiring process. Phase two focused on how twenty-five faculty and staff conceptualized a series of statements or strategies derived from the first phase of the study. The statements were an attempt to identify strategies the college was using or could use in the future in an effort to hire a more diverse full-time

faculty. The conceptualization process was facilitated by the software package, The Concept System (Trochim, 1996).

As a result of the first phase of the study 48 statements or strategies were identified. A complete listing of the statements can be found in Appendix A. Participants were asked to rate each of the 48 statements on a 5 point Likert-type scale of importance with 5 = Extremely Important. The participants were also asked to sort each of the 48 statements into stacks that made sense to them. It was suggested that the statements be grouped for similarity in meaning rather than importance. Each of the resultant stacks were labeled and the statements making up each stack were recorded. The rating and sorted data were entered into the software package, The Concept System (Trochim, 1996).

The software averaged the data and analyzed the similarity sort data. Grayson (1992) described the analysis performed by the software. According to Grayson (1992) the data were aggregated into a nonmetric binomial matrix and two dimensional maps were computed through multivariate analysis (multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis) on that matrix. One of the maps created was a point map where proximity on the map represented similarity between two items. The closer two items were on the map, the more often they had often sorted together into the same stacks or piles by the participants.

Figure 1 (next page) shows the two-dimensional map that resulted from the sorting process. Two broad regions were identified. The participants were asked in follow-up group meetings to respond to the point map. The participants described the two regions as strategies for internal use and for external. There was also a general consensus that most of the points lay near a line described as "pivotal" while those points further away from the center line were considered

to be somewhat more peripheral.

Figure 1. Point Map of Statements.

A hierarchical cluster analysis was then used to group points (statements or strategies) on the map into clusters. A total of ten clusters was chosen and named based on the labels provided by the participants. Figure 2 (next page) shows the results of the cluster maps. The map also shows the relative importance of each cluster based on the mean for the statements with the cluster. The taller the stacks the more important the clusters were thought to be as strategies for hiring a more diverse faculty.

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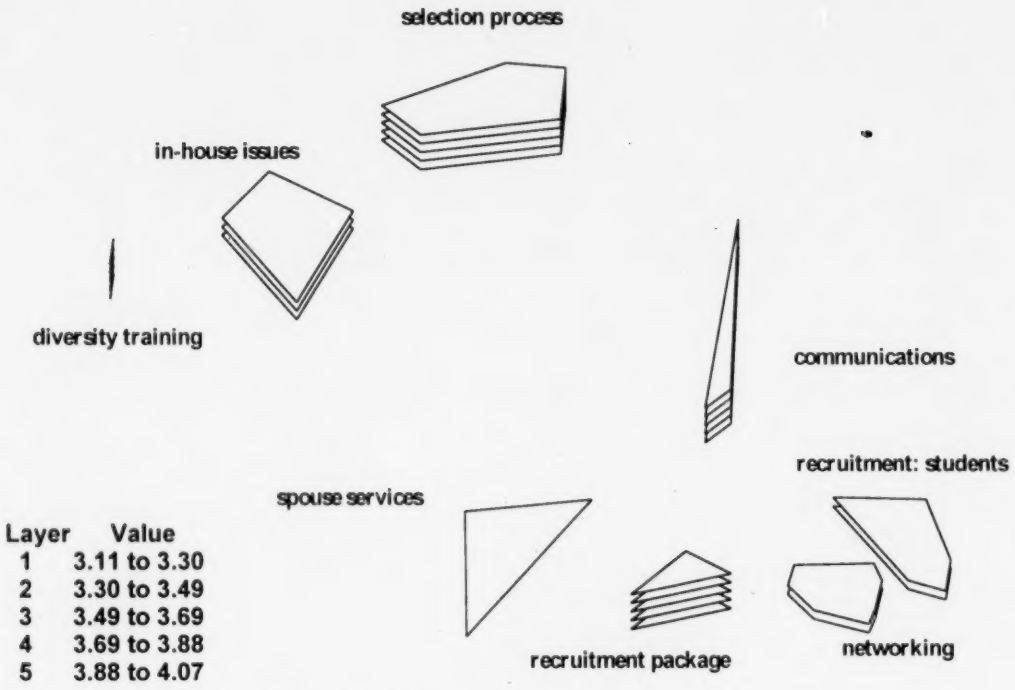

Figure 2. Cluster Map Showing Relative Importance Ratings.

The software allowed for the different clusters and ratings to be matched based on the participants' demographic characteristics. This matching showed the correlation between any two groups in a ladder diagram. The cluster rating averages were shown in order of importance on either side of the ladder with lines drawn between corresponding clusters. Similar relative ratings were shown by a relatively flat line. Relative differences were shown by increasingly steep lines. It was this ladder diagram that served as the basis for analysis for this paper.

Data Sources

The college, called Green Acres Community College for the purpose of this study, had a black female president who was a recognized national leader and had undertaken a public position strongly supporting diversity and multiculturalism. The college had won numerous

awards in the areas of diversity and planning. The college had also begun a number of initiatives to directly address the shortage of minority faculty including a nationally advertised one-year internship for minority faculty without previous teaching experience, diversity training for faculty and staff, and the use of specially trained faculty and staff who fulfilled the role of affirmative action representative on all faculty search committees.

Twenty five faculty and staff were chosen and agreed to participate in the second phase of the study. Participants were chosen because of their special knowledge or position, such as past president of the faculty senate or current president-elect, membership in off-campus recruiting teams, and other leadership areas such as womens' studies, teaching excellence, and affirmative action. In one case a participant in the college's "grow your own" initiative was chosen even though she had not served on a search committee. To ensure that various points of view were included, three people identified as having been critical of the current faculty selection process were included. The purposive nature of the sample meant that the participants were not necessarily representative of the overall college faculty and staff. Approximately half of the participants were female and approximately half were faculty; the remaining group were composed of representatives from both administration and staff.

For this paper two groups were examined to determine if differences in perceived importance existed between those participants who had significant experience in the search process (defined as participating in six or more searches in the precious six years) and those with less experience (defined as having participated in fewer than six searches in the previous six years). There were a total of twelve participants in each of the two categories. One participant (the college president) had indicated no previous participation. However, because she had been

actively involved in formulating the policy for the search process and was active in it in the sense that she interviewed and approved or disapproved of all search committee recommendations, her responses were not included in either group.

Results

Figure 3 shows the ladder diagram for the two demographic groups based on the ten clusters chosen by the entire group. A modest correlation (r = .36) existed in the perception of importance of the various clusters between those who were experienced and those who were less experienced. Those with experience rated the cluster of statements labeled "communications" as

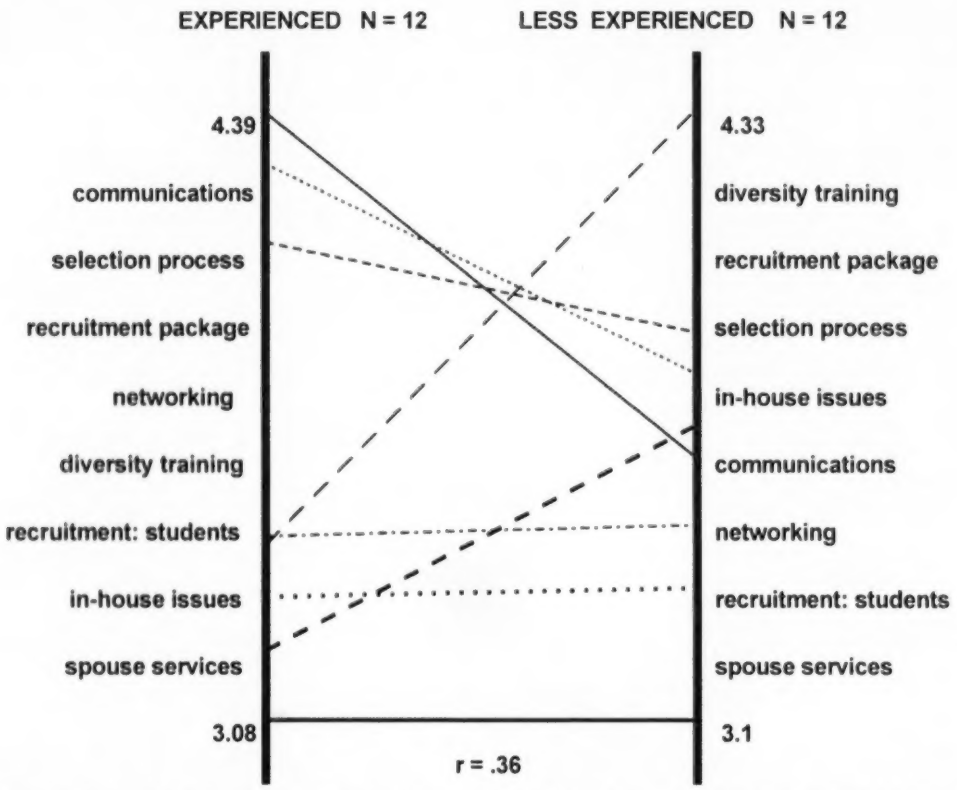

Figure 3. Ladder Diagram Comparing Those With Experience and Those with Less Experience.

the most important (ranked fifth by those with less experience). The "communication" cluster included strategies such as asking faculty members to identify potential candidates and making certain that each candidate's visit was a pleasurable one. Those less experienced rated the "diversity training" cluster as the most important (rated fifth by those with experience). The "diversity training" cluster included statements such as "Enhance diversity training programs for the faculty and staff" and "Educate the board of trustees on the importance of a more diverse faculty." The differences between the perceptions of importance for "diversity training" and "communications" may suggest that "diversity training" had less impact on how the process actually worked, at least from the perspective of those who were experienced. Differences also existed between the groups on the relative importance of the selection process itself. The cluster labeled "selection process" included such strategies as "Need to develop effective methods to evaluate the search process" and "Ensure that membership on search committees is broadly representative." Those with experience rated this cluster higher than those with less experience. Both groups rated the cluster "spouse services" as the least important. The cluster of strategies called "spouse services" included such items as "Provide placement services for spouses" and "Offer one year faculty exchanges."

Conclusions

The hiring practices at Green Acres Community College reflected more participation by the faculty at all stages of the process, and the policies and procedures were clearly stated. The cornerstone of the affirmative action process seemed to have been a wider distribution of advertisements than had existed under previous administrations. Innovative programs such as "grow your own minority faculty" and the use of faculty and staff volunteers to ensure

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compliance have been implemented. The college president has taken highly public positions supporting the hiring of a more diverse faculty. All of these elements should have resulted in an increase in the number of women and minority full-time faculty, yet the actual number of minority faculty has stayed the same and the number of full-time female faculty has decreased in the last six years. It would appear that several factors serve to mitigate an increase in minority faculty. It is possible that faculty search committees do tend to replicate themselves (Schneider, 1987). It would appear that attempts to alter attitudes through such programs as diversity training are perceived as naive or "empty rituals" (Bolman & Deal, 1991), particularly among those who have had more experience on search committees.

Later follow-up discussions with participants in the study who had continued to serve on faculty search committees indicated that experience on search committees seemed to have an effect on how the committees operated. It was reported that experienced members were more at ease with the process and spent less time "agonizing over the details". It was reported that experienced committee members, and particularly experienced committee chairs, asked better questions and asked questions better (ie., more likely to ask follow-up questions).

Another finding of the study is that concept mapping is an effective tool for understanding how groups of individuals think about the hiring process. Concept mapping is useful in identification of consensus (or lack thereof) among various stakeholder groups. If the mapping process were to be repeated on a regular basis, it would be possible to monitor the effectiveness of whatever interventions are chosen. Such an analysis would prove to be a useful tool in evaluation.

Finally, there appears to be an implicit assumption that a pool of minority applicants

exists when, indeed, it may not. The literature (Hill, 1987) had suggested that search committees might use the lack of an adequate pool as a excuse for failure to hire more minority applicants. It may well be that an adequate pool does not exist in all areas of the country and thus might not be an "excuse" but rather an accurate statement. It was informative that nearly everyone rated recruitment as important. Four of the top ten (out of 48) most important strategies (based on mean averages) dealt with the need for more effective recruitment tools. Little is known about the effects of the academic market place on community colleges. Given the lack of adequate study of the community college academic marketplace, clearly more research is needed.

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Appendix A:

Statements Grouped by Clusters

Cluster Statements with Ratings

#	Statement	Rating
Cluster 1. Selection Process		
1	Make the Vice President responsible for planning and evaluating faculty search procedures.	3.40
4	Ensure that the Affirmative Action Representative is involved from the very beginning of the search process.	4.20
8	Have the Vice President meet and brief each faculty search committee as soon as it is appointed.	4.24
13	Develop effective methods to evaluate the search process.	4.24
19	Identify champions who will recommend and support diverse candidates throughout the hiring process and ensure those champions sit on search committees.	3.12
22	Ensure that membership on the search committee is broadly representative.	4.16
25	Develop a sense of faculty ownership in the search process	4.28
26	Involve the search committee at the earliest steps in the process, including writing the position description.	4.00
34	Provide sufficient resources to support the search committee	4.16
35	Develop a pool of faculty and staff who are trained in affirmative action guidelines to serve as Affirmative Action Representatives on search committees.	4.44
36	Provide training to search committee members.	4.24
47	Provide training for search committee chairs in how the process should work.	4.36
	Cluster Averages	4.0 7
Cluster 2. In-house Issues		
12	Have the President clearly articulate the goal of hiring a more diverse faculty	4.20
42	Establish an Affirmative Action Officer who is separate from the Office of Human Resources.	2.68
43	Provide reliable feedback to the faculty and staff on the numbers of minorities in the student population.	3.84
45	Make department chairs responsible for increasing the diversity among their full-and part-time faculty	3.44
46	Identify potential change agents among the faculty and staff and provide them with additional training in such areas as leadership.	3.32
	Cluster Averages	3.50

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Appendix A cont.

#	Statement	Rating
Cluster 3. cont. Diversity Training		
21	Enhance diversity training programs for current faculty and staff.	3.92
29	Educate the Board of Trustees on the importance of a more diverse faculty.	3.96
	Cluster Average	3.94
Cluster 4. Communications		
2	Ask faculty members to help identify potential candidates in their discipline.	3.44
17	Ensure that all part-time faculty are notified of full-time openings.	3.96
48	Make certain that each candidate's visit is a pleasurable one.	4.60
	Cluster Averages	3.99
Cluster 5. Spouse Services		
6	Allocate college resources to provide placement services for spouses of prospective applicants.	2.64
11	Develop a joint spouse program for community employment opportunities.	2.80
15	Offer one year faculty exchanges with other colleges and universities.	3.68
30	Emphasize the location of Green Acres in relationship to a nearby research-oriented university.	3.32
	Cluster Averages	3.11
Cluster 6. Recruitment Package		
9	Develop a recruiting package for use when visiting colleges.	4.32
23	Offer visiting professorships.	3.44
38	Develop recruitment materials that feature Green Acres as a progressive premier community college.	4.36
	Cluster Averages	4.04
Cluster 7. Networking		
3	Actively involve high school counselors in encouraging students to teach at the two-year college level.	2.60
7	Recruit faculty from colleges with programs similar to Green Acres'.	2.80
14	Track former minority students with professional teaching credentials and invite them back to campus.	3.88

Appendix A cont.

#	Statement	Rating
Cluster 7:Networking(cont.)		
16	Obtain lists from colleges with significant numbers of minority graduates and follow up with their placement offices.	3.68
20	Contact labor unions and trade/professional organizations that represent individuals with specific skills.	3.72
32	Network with minority councils of AACC such as the National Council for Black African Affairs.	3.68
39	Strengthen ties with vocational training programs at senior institutions.	4.04
40	Develop scholarships and other incentives for high school and college students in areas of greatest need.	3.52
	Cluster Averages	3.49
Cluster 8: Recruitment of students		
5	Specifically identify and target prospective graduate students.	3.36
10	Recruit former students who may have completed baccalaureate degrees or higher	3.24
18	Identify graduate students who could be mentored by a Green Acres faculty member.	3.24
24	Develop a mentoring program with community college faculty for prospective graduate students prior to their receiving their graduate degree.	3.36
27	Establish joint agreements with senior institutions for students beginning graduate degree programs.	3.16
28	Increase the number of contacts with qualified candidates through professional and community organizations.	3.80
31	Identify present Green Acres students who can, with the college's help, complete their B.A. and M.A. and return to teach for the college.	3.04
33	Utilize existing advisory committees in recruiting qualified applicants with non-educational experience.	3.52
37	Establish joint agreements with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as well as other designated educational institutions with high percentages of minority graduate degree students.	3.92
41	Initiate recruitment efforts focusing on companies in transition or early retirees.	2.60
44	Identify and target strategic employment fairs where the college should be represented.	3.92
	Cluster Averages	3.38